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SECURITY INFORMATION
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION FROM
FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT
CD NO.

STAT

COUNTRY German Democratic Republic

SUBJECT Political - Religion

HOW PUBLISHED Weekly periodical

WHERE PUBLISHED Madrid

DATE PUBLISHED 9 May, 13 Jul 1953

LANGUAGE Spanish

DATE OF INFORMATION 1953

DATE DIST. 14 Dec 1953

NO. OF PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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SOURCE Ecclesia.

TWO PASTORAL LETTERS TO GDR CATHOLICS READ IN CHURCHES

PASTORAL LETTER DEPLORES IRRELIGIOUS SCHOOLS -- Madrid, Ecclesia, 9 May 53

On Sunday, 11 February 1953, a pastoral letter from the Catholic bishops of the GDR (German Democratic Republic) was read in all Catholic churches in GDR. Excerpts from the letter follow.

The letter stated that despite the fact that Article 41 of the Constitution of the GDR assures the Catholic church the right to take a position in accordance with its own viewpoint on problems vital to the people, GDR schools have no religious classes, there is no provision for religion in the school program, and German Catholics cannot establish Christian schools.

According to the letter, materialism is taught in these irreligious schools; the textbooks and teachers' books are inspired by and pervaded with materialism. The latter pointed out that German children are forced to attend these schools for many years, in spite of the fact that the great majority of the German people profess the Christian faith.

The letter continued: "Let no one think that we are inclined to accept this state of affairs! We demand our right and do not surrender it. We must bear many things because the power is against us. We are often forced to wait a long time because we cannot oppose force with force. But we remain unbending in our conviction: 'God and religion must be let into our schools!'"

The letter advised Christian parents to take note of the mental condition of their children, to know what doctrines and plans are being taught them and by what ideas they are expected to be won over. It instructed Christian parents to teach their children about God and religion, Christianity and the Catholic church.

The letter stated: "Instruct your children, not for the sake of wrangling, but for the sake of teaching them how to keep their religious convictions and how to remain inwardly constant, even when circumstances force them to remain silent and listen to other doctrines."

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Emphasizing the importance of daily prayer, the letter said that the weapon of prayer is most effective against attacks of all kinds by those who have no use for religion or are opposed to it.

GDR CATHOLIC BISHOPS SEND PASTORAL LETTER TO EAST GERMAN YOUTH -- Madrid, Ecclesia, 13 Jul 53

The Berlin diocesan weekly Petrus Blatt published a pastoral letter from the bishops of the GDR to East German youth. The letter was read in all GDR churches on 3 May 1953. Ecclesia carried the full letter, from which the following pertinent excerpts were taken.

The letter proclaimed the inviolable right of East German youth to the freedom of their conscience and their faith, as well as their right to be and to remain Christians.

The letter stated: "You must not be frightened by your exposure to so many troubles, even though some cause you serious personal damage and compromise your plans for the future and your studies, making your progress difficult. We deplore the violence and injustice you suffer. Although it is not within our power to keep this torment from you, it is still true that injustice can never be changed to justice, and justice remains what it is."

"All members of the Christian community are urged to see to it that the East German youth does not become lost on the road of agnosticism and unbelief."

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